



Saint Matthew Episcopal Church

In the Episcopal Diocese of Olympia
and The Puyallup Tribe of Indians Reservation
 6800 Eastside Drive NE, Tacoma WA 98422

Ph: 253-927-9808

Office Email: saintmatthew6800@gmail.com

Rector Email: fatherkendall@gmail.com

Parish Website: www.neighborhoodparish.org



GOOD FRIDAY

April 7, 2023

+++

Tonight's Passion Gospel from John, prepared by The Rev. Jane L. Patterson, Ph.D. of Seminary of the Southwest, is designed to show the rhetorical form of John's passion narrative and how translation choices might be deployed to lessen potential anti-Jewish readings. For instance, instead of hearing "the Jews", which may subconsciously evoke a generalized and internalized condemnation of a particular ethnic group or religion, the hearer will hear "Judeans" (although the phrase "King of the Jews" is retained). Additionally, the Solemn Collects have been modified using the inspiration of The Rev. Daniel Joslyn-Siemiatkoski, Ph.D., also of Seminary of the Southwest, as an alternative to those found in the Good Friday liturgy of the 1979 Book of Common Prayer of the Episcopal Church.

For centuries, due to the usage of the phrase "the Jews" and other contextually problematic phrases and concepts, many Christians have wrongly and despicably blamed all Jewish people as members of a specific ethnic and religious group for the death of Jesus and the general rejection of Jesus as the Messiah leading to murderous crusades, pogroms, the Holocaust, and countless acts of anti-Semitic hate and violence. This is despite the fact that Jesus himself was a Jew and that God's covenant with the People of Israel stands complete and unbroken to this day.

Without giving an unjustified pass or an absolution to the writers of the Gospel of John, it should be noted that John's Gospel was written by a community within a context where folks who shared a particular religious identity rooted in the Synagogue were beginning to differentiate themselves much like folks within a particular religion might critique other folks within the same religious tradition today. As interpreters who come well after the full separation of the

Synagogue and the Church, we as Christians have a particular responsibility to not co-opt a context that is not our own and weaponize Holy Scripture to subjugate others with a false sense of our own religious superiority, which is the source of so much violence, terror, and evil in our world. God's commandment is to love all as God loves us. This includes challenging centuries of bad theology and harm done in the name of Jesus, especially toward the people whom Jesus would call his own.

For more information on this topic, please see the article entitled, "Churches consider alternate Good Friday liturgies, Bible translations over concerns of anti-Jewish interpretations" found at the end of end of this Worship Guide.

+++

On this day the ministers enter in silence with all kneeling in silent prayer.

After a period of silence, the Celebrant stands and begins the liturgy.

<i>Celebrant</i>	Blessed be our God.
<i>People</i>	For ever and ever. Amen.
<i>Celebrant</i>	Let us pray

*Almighty God, we pray you graciously to behold this your family, for whom our Lord Jesus Christ was willing to be betrayed, and given into the hands of sinners, and to suffer death upon the cross; who now lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.***

A Reading from Isaiah (52:13-53:12)

See, my servant shall prosper; he shall be exalted and lifted up, and shall be very high. Just as there were many who were astonished at him --so marred was his appearance, beyond human semblance, and his form beyond that of mortals-- so he shall startle many nations; kings shall shut their mouths because of him; for that which had not been told them they shall see, and that which they had not heard they shall contemplate. Who has believed what we have heard? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been

revealed? For he grew up before him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground; he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by others; a man of suffering and acquainted with infirmity; and as one from whom others hide their faces he was despised, and we held him of no account. Surely he has borne our infirmities and carried our diseases; yet we accounted him stricken, struck down by God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the punishment that made us whole, and by his bruises we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have all turned to our own way, and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth. By a perversion of justice he was taken away. Who could have imagined his future? For he was cut off from the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people. They made his grave with the wicked and his tomb with the rich, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth. Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him with pain. When you make his life an offering for sin, he shall see his offspring, and shall prolong his days; through him the will of the LORD shall prosper. Out of his anguish he shall see light; he shall find satisfaction through his knowledge. The righteous one, my servant, shall make many righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore I will allot him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he poured out himself to death, and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

Reader The Word of the Lord.
People **Thanks be to God.**

Psalm 22

- 1 My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? and are so far from my cry and from the words of my distress?
- 2 **O my God, I cry in the daytime, but you do not answer; by night as well, but I find no rest.**

- 3 Yet you are the Holy One, enthroned upon the praises of Israel.
- 4 **Our forefathers put their trust in you; they trusted, and you delivered them.**
- 5 They cried out to you and were delivered; they trusted in you and were not put to shame.
- 6 **But as for me, I am a worm and no man, scorned by all and despised by the people.**
- 7 All who see me laugh me to scorn; they curl their lips and wag their heads, saying,
- 8 **"He trusted in the LORD; let him deliver him; let him rescue him, if he delights in him."**
- 9 Yet you are he who took me out of the womb, and kept me safe upon my mother's breast.
- 10 **I have been entrusted to you ever since I was born; you were my God when I was still in my mother's womb.**
- 11 Be not far from me, for trouble is near, and there is none to help.
- 12 **Many young bulls encircle me; strong bulls of Bashan surround me.**
- 13 They open wide their jaws at me, like a ravening and a roaring lion.
- 14 **I am poured out like water; all my bones are out of joint; my heart within my breast is melting wax.**
- 15 My mouth is dried out like a pot-sherd; my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth; and you have laid me in the dust of the grave.
- 16 **Packs of dogs close me in, and gangs of evildoers circle around me; they pierce my hands and my feet; I can count all my bones.**
- 17 They stare and gloat over me; they divide my garments among them; they cast lots for my clothing.
- 18 **Be not far away, O LORD; you are my strength; hasten to help me.**

- 19 Save me from the sword, my life from the power of the dog.
- 20 **Save me from the lion's mouth, my wretched body from the horns of wild bulls.**
- 21 I will declare your Name to my brethren; in the midst of the congregation I will praise you.
- 22 **Praise the LORD, you that fear him; stand in awe of him, O offspring of Israel; all you of Jacob's line, give glory.**
- 23 For he does not despise nor abhor the poor in their poverty; neither does he hide his face from them; but when they cry to him he hears them.
- 24 **My praise is of him in the great assembly; I will perform my vows in the presence of those who worship him.**
- 25 The poor shall eat and be satisfied, and those who seek the LORD shall praise him: "May your heart live for ever!"
- 26 **All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the LORD, and all the families of the nations shall bow before him.**
- 27 For kingship belongs to the LORD; he rules over the nations.
- 28 **To him alone all who sleep in the earth bow down in worship; all who go down to the dust fall before him.**
- 29 My soul shall live for him; my descendants shall serve him; they shall be known as the LORD'S for ever.
- 30 **They shall come and make known to a people yet unborn the saving deeds that he has done.**

A Reading from Hebrews (10:16-25)

The Holy Spirit testifies saying, "This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord: I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds." She also adds, "I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more." Where there is forgiveness of these, there is

no longer any offering for sin. Therefore, my friends, since we have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain (that is, through his flesh), and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us approach with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who has promised is faithful. And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

Reader The Word of the Lord.
People **Thanks be to God.**

The Passion of our Lord According to John (18:1—19:42)

Narrator: After Jesus had spoken these words, he went out with his disciples across the Kidron valley to a place where there was a garden, which he and his disciples entered. Now Judas, who betrayed him, also knew the place, because Jesus often met there with his disciples. So Judas brought a detachment of soldiers together with police from the chief priests and the Pharisees, and they came there with lanterns and torches and weapons. Then Jesus, knowing all that was to happen to him, came forward and asked them,

Jesus: Whom are you looking for?

People: **Jesus of Nazareth.**

Narrator: Jesus replied,

Jesus: I am he.

Narrator: Judas, who betrayed him, was standing with them. When Jesus said to them, "I am he," they stepped back and fell to the ground. Again, he asked them,

Jesus: Whom are you looking for?

People: **Jesus of Nazareth.**

Narrator: Jesus answered,

Jesus: I told you that I am he. So, if you are

looking for me, let these men go.

Narrator: (This was to fulfill the word that he had spoken, "I did not lose a single one of those whom you gave me.") Then Simon Peter, who had a sword, drew it, struck the high priest's slave, and cut off his right ear. The slave's name was Malchus. Jesus said to Peter,

Jesus: Put your sword back into its sheath. Am I not to drink the cup that the Father has given me?

Narrator: So the soldiers, their officer, and the Judean police arrested Jesus and bound him. First they took him to Annas, who was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priest that year. Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Judean leadership that it was better to have one person die for the people. Simon Peter and another disciple followed Jesus. Since that disciple was known to the high priest, he went with Jesus into the courtyard of the high priest, but Peter was standing outside at the gate. So, the other disciple, who was known to the high priest, went out, spoke to the woman who guarded the gate, and brought Peter in. The woman said to Peter,

Woman: You are not also one of this man's disciples, are you?

Narrator: He said,

Peter: I am not.

Narrator: Now the slaves and the police had made a charcoal fire because it was cold, and they were standing around it and warming themselves. Peter also was standing with them and warming himself. Then the high priest questioned Jesus about his disciples and about his teaching. Jesus answered,

Jesus: I have spoken openly to the world; I have always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where all the Judeans come together. I have said nothing in secret. Why do you ask me? Ask those who heard what I said to them; they know what I said.

Narrator: When he had said this, one of the police standing nearby struck Jesus on the face, saying,

Police: Is that how you answer the high priest?

Narrator: Jesus answered,

Jesus: If I have spoken wrongly, testify to the wrong. But if I have spoken rightly, why do you strike me?

Narrator: Then Annas sent him bound to Caiaphas the high priest. Now Simon Peter was standing and warming himself. They asked him,

People: **You are not also one of his disciples, are you?**

Narrator: He denied it and said,

Peter: I am not.

Narrator: One of the slaves of the high priest, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, asked,

Slave: Did I not see you in the garden with him?

Narrator: Again, Peter denied it, and at that moment the cock crowed. Then they took Jesus from Caiaphas to Pilate's headquarters. It was early in the morning. They themselves did not enter the headquarters, so as to avoid ritual defilement and to be able to eat the Passover. So, Pilate went out to them and said,

Pilate: What accusation do you bring against this man?

Narrator: They answered,

People: **If this man were not a criminal, we would not have handed him over to you.**

Narrator: Pilate said to them,

Pilate: Take him yourselves and judge him according to your law.

Narrator: The Judeans replied,

People: **We are not permitted to put anyone to death.**

Narrator: (This was to fulfill what Jesus had said when he indicated the kind of death he

was to die.) Then Pilate entered the headquarters again, summoned Jesus, and asked him,

Pilate: Are you the King of the Jews?

Narrator: Jesus answered,

Jesus: Do you ask this on your own, or did others tell you about me?

Narrator: Pilate replied,

Pilate: I am not a Judean, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests have handed you over to me. What have you done?

Narrator: Jesus answered,

Jesus: My kingdom is not from this world. If my kingdom were from this world, my followers would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Judeans. But as it is, my kingdom is not from here.

Narrator: Pilate asked him,

Pilate: So, you are a king?

Narrator: Jesus answered,

Jesus: You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice.

Narrator: Pilate asked him,

Pilate: What is truth?

Narrator: After he had said this, he went out to the Judeans again and told them,

Pilate: I find no case against him. But you have a custom that I release someone for you at the Passover. Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?

Narrator: They shouted in reply,

People: **Not this man, but Barabbas!**

Narrator: Now Barabbas was a bandit. Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged. And the soldiers wove a crown of thorns and put it on his head, and they dressed him in a purple robe. They kept coming up to him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" and striking him on the face. Pilate went out again and said to them,

Pilate: Look, I am bringing him out to you to let you know that I find no case against him.

Narrator: So, Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them,

Pilate: Here is the man!

Narrator: When the chief priests and the police saw him, they shouted,

People: **Crucify him! Crucify him!**

Narrator: Pilate said to them,

Pilate: Take him yourselves and crucify him; I find no case against him.

Narrator: The Judeans answered him,

People: **We have a law, and according to that law he ought to die because he has claimed to be the Son of God.**

Narrator: Now when Pilate heard this, he was more afraid than ever. He entered his headquarters again and asked Jesus,

Pilate: Where are you from?

Narrator: But Jesus gave him no answer. Pilate therefore said to him,

Pilate: Do you refuse to speak to me? Do you not know that I have power to release you, and power to crucify you?

Narrator: Jesus answered him,

Jesus: You would have no power over me unless it had been given you from above; therefore, the one who handed me over to you is guilty of a greater sin.

Narrator: From then on Pilate tried to release him, but the Judeans cried out,

People: **If you release this man, you are no friend of the emperor. Everyone who claims to be a king sets himself against the emperor.**

Narrator: When Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus outside and sat on the judge's bench at a place called The Stone Pavement, or in Hebrew Gabbatha. Now it was the day of Preparation for the Passover; and it was about noon. He said to the Judeans,

Pilate: Here is your King!

Narrator: They cried out,

People: Away with him! Away with him!
Crucify him!

Narrator: Pilate asked them,

Pilate: Shall I crucify your King?

Narrator: The chief priests answered,

People: We have no king but the emperor.

Narrator: Then he handed him over to them to be crucified. So, they took Jesus; and carrying the cross by himself, he went out to what is called The Place of the Skull, which in Hebrew is called Golgotha. There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, with Jesus between them. Pilate also had an inscription written and put on the cross. It read, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." Many of the Judeans read this inscription, because the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew, in Latin, and in Greek. Then the chief priests of the Judeans said to Pilate,

People: Do not write, 'The King of the Jews,' but, 'This man said, I am King of the Jews.'

Narrator: Pilate answered,

Pilate: What I have written I have written.

Narrator: When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his clothes and divided them into four parts, one for each soldier. They also took his tunic; (now the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from the top). So, they said to one another,

People: Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it to see who will get it.

Narrator: (This was to fulfill what the scripture says, "They divided my clothes among themselves, and for my clothing they cast lots.") And that is what the soldiers did. Meanwhile, standing near the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing beside her, he said to his mother,

Jesus: Woman, here is your son.

Narrator: Then he said to the disciple,

Jesus: Here is your mother.

Narrator: And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home. After this, when Jesus knew that all was now finished, he said (in order to fulfill the scripture),

Jesus: I am thirsty.

Narrator: A jar full of sour wine was standing there. So, they put a sponge full of the wine on a branch of hyssop and held it to his mouth. When Jesus had received the wine, he said,

Jesus: It is finished.

Narrator: Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

(A period of silence is kept.)

Narrator: Then the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and of the other who had been crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. Instead, one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once blood and water came out. (He who saw this has testified so that you also may believe. His testimony is true, and he knows that he tells the truth.) These things occurred so that the scripture might be fulfilled, "None of his bones shall be broken." And again, another passage of scripture says, "They will look on the one whom they have pierced." After these things, Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus, though a secret one because of his fear of the Judean authorities, asked Pilate to let him take away the body of Jesus. Pilate gave him permission; so, he came and removed his body. Nicodemus, who had at first come to Jesus by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, weighing about a hundred pounds. They took the body of Jesus and wrapped it with the spices in linen cloths, according to the burial custom of the Jews. Now there was a garden in the place where he was crucified, and in the garden there was a new tomb in which no one had ever been laid. And so, because it was the

Jewish day of Preparation, and the tomb
was nearby, they laid Jesus there.

The Sermon

Silence for reflection

The Solemn Collects

All standing, the Celebrant says to the people

Dear People of God: Our heavenly Father sent his Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved; that all who believe in him might be delivered from the power of sin and death, and become heirs with him of everlasting life.

We pray, therefore, for people everywhere according to their needs.

Let us pray for the Jewish people who possess an eternal covenant with the Lord, who delivered them from bondage to freedom;

For continued faithfulness to God's covenant with them;

For their flourishing in peace as witnesses to God's sustaining love;

For safety from all malice and harm;

For the fullness of redemption for the sake of God's Name.

That unity and concord may exist between Israel and the Church, Jews and Gentiles, in obedience to God's will.

Silence

God of Abraham, you planted your people Israel as the root and grafted us as wild branches into a single olive tree of praise to you: As we come near to the cross, we lament the history of prejudice and violence we have fomented between ourselves and your faithful people, of whom Jesus was born. Bless the children of your covenant, Jew and Gentile alike, as we strive together to attain the fullness of your blessing for the world. **Amen.**

Let us pray for the holy Catholic Church of Christ throughout the world;

For its unity in witness and service

For all bishops and other ministers

and the people whom they serve

For Gregory, our Bishop, and all the people of this

diocese

For all Christians in this community

For those about to be baptized

That God will confirm the Church in faith, increase it in love, and preserve it in peace.

Silence

Almighty and everlasting God, by whose Spirit the whole body of your faithful people is governed and sanctified: Receive our supplications and prayers which we offer before you for all members of your holy Church, that in their vocation and ministry they may truly and devoutly serve you; through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

Let us pray for all nations and peoples of the earth, and for those in authority among them;

For Joseph, the President, and Kamala, the Vice President of the United States

For our Congress and Supreme Court

For all tribal and indigenous governments and councils within the stolen confines of this land

For the Members and Representatives of the United Nations

For all who serve the common good

That by God's help they may seek justice and truth, and live in peace and concord.

Silence

Almighty God, kindle, we pray, in every heart the true love of peace, and guide with your wisdom those who take counsel for the nations of the earth; that in tranquility your dominion may increase, until the earth is filled with the knowledge of your love; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Let us pray for all who suffer and are afflicted in body or in mind;

For those who are hungry and homeless, destitute and oppressed

For those who are ill or disabled, in body, mind, or spirit

For those in loneliness, fear, and anguish

For those who face temptation, doubt, and despair

For those who are sorrowful and bereaved

For those who are persecuted for the sake of Christ

For prisoners, refugees, and captives

For victims of war, genocide, and trafficking, and all those in mortal danger

That God in his mercy will comfort and relieve them, and grant them the knowledge of his love, and stir up in us the will and patience to minister to their needs.

Silence

Gracious God, the comfort of all who sorrow, the strength of all who suffer: Let the cry of those in misery and need come to you, that they may find your mercy present with them in all their afflictions; and give us, we pray, the strength to serve them for the sake of him who suffered for us, your Son Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Let us pray for those who have not embraced God's redemptive love;

For those who are distant from God
For those who have lost their faith
For those without faith
For those hardened by sin and indifference
For the contemptuous and the scornful
For those who have been wounded by the people of Christ
For those who have persecuted others in the name of Christ
For those who are persecutors of his disciples,
That God will lead sinners to repentance, and sustain all in a life of faith and obedience.

Silence

Merciful God, the source of life and fountain of mercy, let the Gospel of your Son Jesus Christ be preached with grace and love; turn the hearts of the followers of Jesus who have harmed others in his name; lead all to repentance and amendment of life; and sustain by your loving grace all who lift their eyes to you. **Amen.**

Let us commit ourselves to God, and pray for the grace of a holy life, that, with all who have departed this world and have died in the peace of Christ, and those whose faith is known to God alone, we may be accounted worthy to enter into the fullness of the joy of our Lord, and receive the crown of life in the day of resurrection.

Silence

O God of unchangeable power and eternal light: Look favorably on your whole Church, that wonderful and sacred mystery; by the effectual working of your providence, carry out in tranquility the plan of salvation; let the whole world see and know that things which were cast down are being raised up, and things which had grown old are being made new, and that all things are being brought to their perfection by him through whom all things were made, your Son Jesus Christ our Lord; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

VENERATION OF THE CROSS

Please kneel as you are able

After the Celebrant and Altar Party, the Congregation is then invited to come forward by pews and venerate the Cross in Prayer.

The following songs and hymns are sung during the Veneration:

Hymn 172	<i>Were you there</i>
Hymn 160	<i>Cross of Jesus</i>
Hymn 158	<i>Ah, holy Jesus</i>

MASS OF THE PRESANCTIFIED

The Congregation remains kneeling in silent prayer as the Reserved Sacrament is retrieved

The Celebrant says

Let us confess our sins against God and our neighbor.

Silence may be kept.

Celebrant and People

Most merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done, and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We are truly sorry and we humbly repent. For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, have mercy on us and forgive us; that we may delight in your will, and walk in your ways, to the glory of your Name. Amen.

Almighty God have mercy on you, forgive you all your sins through our Lord Jesus Christ, strengthen you in all goodness, and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep you in eternal life. **Amen.**

Lord's Prayer

Celebrant As our Savior Christ has taught us, we
now pray,

**Our father in heaven
hallowed be your Name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those
who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours,
now and forever. Amen.**

The Communion from the Reserved Sacrament

Facing the people, the Celebrant says the following Invitation

The Gifts of God for the People of God.

*All persons are invited to come forward to receive Holy Communion or a blessing. **For this evening, a mild protocol will be in place with the priest only receiving the wine.** Gluten-free hosts are available upon request at the rail. If you have yet to be baptized and are interested in learning more about this sacrament, please see one of the clergy following the liturgy.*

All the bread and wine are consumed as there is no remaining Sacramental Body and Blood of Christ in the church until Easter Day

Concluding prayer

The service concludes with the following prayer.

Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, we pray you to set your passion, cross, and death between your judgment and our souls, now and in the hour of our death. Give mercy and grace to the living; pardon and rest to the dead; to your holy Church peace and concord; and to us sinners everlasting life and glory; for with the Father and the Holy Spirit you live and reign, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

*No Blessing or Dismissal as the Triduum continues on Holy Saturday at 10:00 AM and then
THE GREAT VIGIL OF EASTER,
Saturday Night at 8:30 PM
at St. Mark's Cathedral, Seattle
(in-person or livestreamed)*

Offertory

*This evening's loose cash offerings go to our
Emergency Aid Fund, which directly serves families and individuals in need within our community. Your generosity makes saying "yes" to those who need help the most possible.*



Churches consider alternate Good Friday liturgies, Bible translations over concerns of anti-Jewish interpretations

BY DAVID PAULSEN
April 12, 2022



The Episcopal Church and other mainline Protestant denominations follow the schedule of readings known as the Revised Common Lectionary, which anchors John 18-19 on Good Friday. The Bible most familiar to Episcopalians, the New Revised Standard Version, names “the Jews” as Jesus’ antagonists in John’s narrative. Photo: Associated Press

[Episcopal News Service] Bishops and deputies are grappling anew with longstanding concerns that the Good Friday lectionary risks fueling anti-Jewish sentiment. Despite the renewed attention – as well as the development of new liturgies and a new Bible translation – scholars and church leaders suggest a durable solution to John 18-19 could remain elusive.

The dilemma before the 80th General Convention is one that vexes Good Friday preachers every year. The terms “Ioudaios” and “Ioudaioi,” often translated into English as “the Jews,” appear 71 times in the Gospel of John – nowhere more problematically [than in the Passion narrative](#). Those chapters are read in Protestant churches everywhere on Good Friday, which falls on April 15 this year.

The context for John’s use of “the Jews” is undeniably confrontational, in verses that depict the religious leaders and crowds in Jerusalem condemning Jesus to death.

“This issue of how to translate this term is one of the most contentious issues in Biblical studies,” John Kutsko, executive director of the [Society of Biblical Literature](#), told Episcopal News Service. The use of “hoi Ioudaioi” in John 18-19 “really does stand out for its apparent hostility.”

Resolution C014 proposed by the Diocese of Washington [D.C.] asks the 80th General Convention to “recommend revisions to the Church’s appointed Lectionary readings for Holy Week to remedy passages that use language that has been interpreted as anti-Semitic.” The bishops’ and deputies’ committees on Prayer Book Liturgy & Music held a hearing on the resolution in February and will consider the measure when General Convention meets July 7-14 in Baltimore, Maryland.

The Episcopal Church offers some flexibility in avoiding the problematic language through Scripture translations. The commonly used New Revised Standard Version, or NRSV, is just one of 16 Bible translations that are canonically approved for use in Episcopal services. When Pilate argues with “hoi loudaioi” over Jesus’ fate, many of those versions follow the NRSV in referring to “the Jews,” but the Common English Bible specifies “Jewish leaders.” The Contemporary English Version and Good News Bible use “the crowd” or “the people.”

Kutsko led a team of biblical scholars who recently completed an updated translation of the NRSV Bible [that was released this year](#). In an interview with ENS, he acknowledged arguments in favor of translating “hoi loudaioi” as “the Judeans,” which would reflect their geography rather than their faith or ethnicity.

However, Kutsko cautioned, “it’s more complicated than that.” Though well-meaning, a decision to eliminate “the Jews” from the Gospel verses could have the effect of inaccurately hiding Jesus’ Jewishness, the Jewish context for his ministry and the evangelism of the early Christians to other Jews. It also could unintentionally echo antisemitic threads of Christianity that have sought to portray Jesus as more white, less Jewish, he said.

After consulting with Jewish New Testament scholars, Kutsko’s team of translators settled on keeping “the Jews” when the term had a primarily religious connotation, as arguably is the case in John 18-19. Footnotes are used to make clear that “the Judeans” is sometimes used as an alternate translation.

Christian denominations, including The Episcopal Church, have long faced scrutiny over liturgies, doctrine and Scripture [that have at times fueled hatred against Jews](#), most consequentially during the Holocaust. The Episcopal Church’s Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music first began developing its guidance for preachers in response to [a 2006 General Convention resolution](#) that sought to address Christian anti-Jewish prejudice.

General Convention passed similar resolutions at four straight triennial meetings, [most recently in 2015](#). It asked the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music “to collect, review, and disseminate materials to address Christian anti-Judaism expressed in and stirred by portions of Christian scriptures and liturgical texts.”

That guidance has not alleviated what some see as the central difficulty with the lectionary and Bible translations. The Episcopal Church and other mainline Protestant denominations follow the schedule of readings known as the Revised Common Lectionary, which anchors John 18-19 on Good Friday. The Bible most familiar to Episcopalians, the New Revised Standard Version, names “the Jews” as Jesus’ antagonists in John’s narrative.

“Your good faith attempts to provide clergy guidelines on how to address the anti-Jewish verses have not worked; the guidelines are not helpful; the clergy aren’t all paying attention,” Amy-Jill Levine, a Vanderbilt University Divinity School professor of New Testament and Jewish studies, testified during the Feb. 22 committee hearing on Resolution C014. “Since you keep repeating the guidelines, and the guidelines don’t work, then the problem is not with the guidelines, it’s with the readings. Change the lectionary.”

The resolution proposed by the Diocese of Washington doesn’t specify a remedy but references a 20-year-old scholarly article that lays out five scenarios for Good Friday:

- Read John 18-19 in full, with the preacher required to address the problematic language.
- Condense John 18-19 to avoid those problematic passages.
- Assemble a thematic series of John readings that isn’t focused solely on the Passion.
- Read the Passion narrative from one of the other three Gospels, instead of John.
- Read John 18-19 nearly in full, eliminating certain words.

General Convention also is considering Resolution C030, proposed by the Diocese of New York, which seeks to scrutinize all “lectionaries authorized for use in The Episcopal Church that contain language that has been interpreted as anti-Semitic, anti-Jewish, or supersessionist.” It suggests the Standing Committee on Liturgy and Music provide alternate lectionary readings or translations to avoid such language in worship services.

The Rev. Daniel Joslyn-Siemiatkoski, a church history professor at Seminary of the Southwest in Austin, Texas, helped developed an alternate Good Friday liturgy last year that acknowledges and celebrates God’s ongoing covenant with the Jewish people. It also changes “the Jews” to “the Judeans” in the Gospel reading. Joslyn-Siemiatkoski told ENS that the liturgy was well-received at the seminary, and he received positive feedback from Episcopal congregations that chose to use the liturgy in their Good Friday services last year.

He said he was disappointed but not surprised that the update to the NRSV translation chose to continue referring to “the Jews” in John 18-19, though he respects Levine and other Jewish New Testament scholars who have argued against changing “the Jews” partly because it foregrounds historic and ongoing tensions in Jewish-Christian relations. “You don’t want to eliminate a Jewish presence from the New Testament,” he added.

Even so, he worries the narrator’s antagonism toward “the Jews” in the Gospel of John cannot be separated from the modern reception of the words as they are read in churches every Good Friday, which risks normalizing anti-Jewish sentiment in some contemporary listeners.

A lot of the pressure, in that case, turns back to preacher to put the biblical words into proper context, he said, a task that should be taken up more than once a year on Good Friday. “It’s better to have developed a pattern of teaching and preaching throughout the course of one’s time in leadership in a congregation,” Joslyn-Siemiatkoski said, “to educate the congregation about the deeper issues of Jesus and his Jewish context and Jewish-Christian relations.”

– David Paulsen is an editor and reporter for Episcopal News Service. He can be reached at dpaulsen@episcopalchurch.org.